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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

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NUCLEAR TEST BAN TALKS

The USSR's initial response to the Western proposals at the nuclear test ban conference suggests that Moscow is still undecided as to its future course of action. After having previously indicated that a reply would be forthcoming after the Easter recess, chief Soviet delegate Tsarapkin on 4 April limited his remarks to acceptance "in principle" of those Western concessions that accepted previous Soviet positions. He stated that Soviet specialists were still studying other portions of the new Western plan. Although Tsarapkin adopted a more positive tone than he has used in his informal comments outside the conference, his statement represented no change in existing Soviet positions.

The Soviet delegate accepted 1) the American and British proposals for a permanent ban on testing in outer space; 2) the Western offer to permit Soviet technicians to inspect nuclear devices to be used in both the research program for improving detection methods and in explosions for peaceful purposes; and 3) Western agreement to a veto over the total budget.

Tsarapkin showed no flexibility on those aspects of the proposals where the West was not fully in accord with Moscow. He maintained the Soviet position that there should be one-for-one parity in nuclear detonations for the peaceful uses program. He also stated that the USSR continued to insist on a veto over individual portions of the budget and

charged the West with inconsistency in agreeing to the right of an over-all veto without allowing a veto on specific items. He concluded by describing his acceptance as a "positive step." On the following day Tsarapkin again pressed the Western delegations to record the conference's agreement in principle to the points accepted by the Soviet delegation.

Although Tsarapkin failed to reiterate the Soviet proposal for a tripartite administration of the control system, Foreign Minister Gromyko told Ambassador McCloy on 30 March that this was a "sticking point" for the USSR and admitted that Moscow desired a veto. Gromyko said that while Moscow would make a serious study of the American proposals, he was not impressed thus far. As an example, he stated that the USSR did not consider Western reduction in proposed control posts in the USSR from 21 to 19 an important gesture.

In a subsequent conversation with an American official on 3 April, the head of the Polish UN delegation, who participated in the McCloy-Gromyko talks, stated that he had received the impression from Gromyko afterward that the test ban negotiations would be "locked," with no real progress until after the talks on general disarmament had started and shown some signs of advance. The Pole said he believes the USSR is not completely aware of the serious negative effect a failure at Geneva would have on the US attitude toward general disarmament.

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Prior to Tsarapkin's remarks on 4 April, the US delegation had been inclined to believe that the USSR would prefer to have the West take any action in breaking off the conference and that the most likely Soviet tactic would be to protract the negotiations. This would have the advantages for Moscow of prolonging the current uncontrolled moratorium, of providing opportunities for underlying US [redacted] divergences to emerge in pressure mounted in the US for renewed testing, and of giving the USSR some justification for refusing nuclear weapons to the Chinese Communists.

The delegation, however, believes that, in view of the forthcoming general disarmament talks, the next French test may be used as a possible pretext for a Soviet move to terminate the talks--on the grounds that a test ban in itself would not contribute to disarmament--and to propose a merger of a test ban with other disarmament plans. There are no current signs that the USSR intends to withdraw, but [redacted] the American [redacted] delegations are increasingly inclined to believe

that prospects for reaching a quick agreement on an acceptable basis are not bright.

Soviet propaganda commentary on the talks dropped off during the Easter recess. After their resumption, however, Pravda published the text of Tsarapkin's interview with CBS correspondent Schorr on 23 March in which the Soviet delegate termed the main Western proposals unacceptable. In an interview with the East German news service on 30 March, Tsarapkin described the Western concessions as "much ado about nothing."

Referring to the US offer of parity representation on the control commission, Tsarapkin said that consent to the principle of parity "was linked with so many conditions that in practice very likely nothing will be left of it." He claimed that on all other essential points except those which accepted known Soviet positions, the US was "simply adhering to its old point of view, which is unacceptable to the Soviet Union." Tsarapkin also charged that continuation of French testing would directly endanger the the conference and would render a treaty invalid. [redacted]

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